Planting fruit trees along rail lines

†1501. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large areas of land are lying unutilized on both sides of rail lines;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the said land can be well utilized by planting fruit trees; and

(c) if so, whether the Ministry of Railways would prepare any time bound programme, alongwith Ministry of Environment and Forests, in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) and (b) Land is required to be kept vacant along the railway track, in the form of longitudinal strips, for operation and maintenance of track, that is, stacking of ballast, sleepers etc., borrowing earth in connection with routine maintenance works and for transporting Railway materials etc. Permitted varieties of trees and ornamental shrubs are planted in some of these strips of land to maintain greenery and protect the land from unauthorised use. Some strips of land are licensed for agriculture to railway employees. However, fruit bearing trees are generally not permitted along the tracks to avoid stone-throwing by people living in the vicinity, which may cause injury to railway passengers and damage[s] to railway property.

(c) Does not arise.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.